

July 5, '77

Dear Dr. Wimalajeeva,

You find that in spite of reading and listening to the teachings you have not accumulated much sati and paññā. You find that you have only intellectual understanding of anicca, dukkha and anattā. You think that it is helpful for you to sit and concentrate on breathing and that this is a condition for the arising of sati of satipatthāna which is aware of nāma and rūpa. Through mindfulness of citta you find that ^{you} /can experience anicca, impermanence.

What is right awareness of the right object? What are the conditions for its arising? These are questions we talk a great deal about during the seminar in Sri Lanka. We all feel desperate now and then. Haven't we listened a lot, studied a lot. Where is the right awareness then? But is the self not in the center of everything while we ask ourselves these questions? We find it a shame for 'ourselves' that there isn't more sati. Can't we accept it that it develops, in its own tempo, maybe during countless lives? In Sri Lanka Khun Sujin and Phra Dhammadhara stressed time and again that it may take many lives before right awareness has been accumulated more.

What can be done in order that sati arises? Certainly not trying to sit and concentrate with the purpose of having more sati. That is desire, lobha. Listening, considering with patience, intellectual understanding. There are no other conditions.

What is the object of sati? Seeing, visible object, hearing, sound, thinking, hardness, softness, in short, the nāmas and rūpas which appear now. When do these objects have to be studied with sati? Only when sitting? Does it make any difference, whether seeing appears while sitting, lying down, standing or walking? There is seeing now, it experiences visible object. 'Study it, study it now,' Khun Sujin reminded us time and again. What about visible object? It appears now. It is that which is experienced through the eye-sense. We can call it colour or visible object. While we pay attention to shape and form, there is not seeing. But we are so used to 'seeing' people and things. That is not seeing, but the perceiving of concepts. When we understand intellectually that paying attention to shape and form is not seeing, it is a step in the right direction.

Seeing is an experience, it is nāma. Visible object is not nāma, it is rūpa. Seeing is a citta, and it only experiences visible object, that is its only function. Sati may arise with yet another citta, and it can be aware of seeing or of visible object, but of only one reality at a time. Many moments of seeing but no sati at all. Sometimes sati may arise with kusala citta and then there can be study of seeing as only the experience of visible object, or study of visible

object which is only what appears through eyes, no thing in it, no person in it.

It seems that we 'join' seeing and visible object instead of knowing them one at a time. Are we sure when there is awareness of seeing and when of visible object? When of hearing and when of sound? When there are 'wholes', when we join them together, there is no awareness.

Khum Sujin said that we have to be courageous and find out whether there is awareness of seeing or of visible object, or any other reality, or no awareness yet. It takes a long time before we know what right awareness is. We seem to spend a lot of time finding out first what sati is not.

It is impossible to be able to experience impermanence before one has realised the difference between *nāma* and *rūpa* through direct experience. Do we experience the arising and falling away of realities? The arising and falling away of what? Of seeing? Or of visible object? Or are we not sure what seeing is and what visible object is? How can we then experience the arising and falling away of either one of them?

We should not confuse the appearing and disappearing of realities with the experience of impermanence. Seeing appears, a moment later hearing appears, then after that there is thinking of a concept. We can notice that there are many different moments of consciousness and that they change all the time. Certainly it shows that there is no self, no moment which stays, but this is still intellectual understanding. We should not delude ourselves into thinking that this is the experience of arising and falling away, which is *vipassanā paññā*. Again, as it is also explained in the *Visuddhimagga*, there must first be a very precise, very clear knowledge of the difference between the characteristics of *nāma* and *rūpa*. If one tries to concentrate on *cittas*, this is not the way to develop the *vipassanā paññā* which knows the impermanence of *nāma* and *rūpa*.

One cannot direct awareness to 'contemplation of *citta*'; awareness arises and it is aware of any reality which appears, be it *nāma* or be it *rūpa*. Neither can one direct *citta* first to *samatha* and then to *vipassanā*, as you have noticed yourself. *Samatha* is a way of *kusāla*. If there is right understanding of the object of *samatha* and of the way to become calm, calmness can be cultivated and one is temporarily away from *lobha*, *dosa* and *moha*. Calmness has to be wholesome calmness, not calmness which accompanies *lobha* or *moha* and which is thus not real calmness. Right understanding of the object of *samatha* and calmness have to be emphasized; *samatha* is not a matter of trying very hard to concentrate. That can be *lobha* or *dosa*, not *bhāvanā*. One has to know oneself very well in order to be able to cultivate *samatha*. Otherwise one takes for *samatha* what

is not samatha. One has to know exactly, very precisely when the citta is kusala, and when it is akusala. Thus samatha is very, very difficult. One may so easily delude oneself. One may sit for two hours or longer, but if there is no right understanding of the object of samatha and if one does not know one's citta, there is no samatha bhāvanā.

Mindfulness of breath is one of the most difficult subjects. It is not watching one's breath; at that time there is clinging. Don't we like our breath? Is there an idea of mine, it belongs to me? We find it so important. It can be viewed with right understanding. It is only breath, rūpa, conditioned by citta. Our life depends on it and when breath ceases, it is the end of this life. Why cling to it? The 'sign' of this subject is very difficult, since it is so subtle. And, as I said: wanting to watch is not mindfulness of breath.

For samatha right understanding is necessary. For vipassanā right understanding is necessary; but the type of right understanding in vipassanā is different from the right understanding in samatha. The object which is known in vipassanā is different from the object known in samatha. In vipassanā the object is a nāma or rūpa which appears right now. Therefore, how can a moment of samatha be preparation for vipassanā? The right understanding of samatha cannot change into right understanding of vipassanā. But the calmness of samatha can be object of awareness in vipassanā, since everything can be object of awareness in vipassanā.

It is not said in the scriptures that one has to cultivate samatha first or that one has to sit. Many monks were used to sitting and cultivating samatha, even before the Buddha's time. That is why we read about sitting. But the Buddha also said that they should be mindful no matter what they were doing, eating, talking, awake, falling asleep, etc.

You may still wonder what can be done to have sati, to know seeing and visible object. When we keep on thinking and doubting what seeing is, there is no awareness of seeing, but, what appears? While we are worrying and while we have doubts about awareness, about nāma and rūpa, are there no realities appearing? No rūpas, no feelings, no other nāmas? We find it not so interesting to be aware and study at such moments, since we set our mind on seeing, visible object, hearing or sound. We have heard about these realities and now we think we should direct sati just a little towards these realities. That is not the way. If there is awareness of whatever nāma or rūpa appears without naming it, it can be the beginning of paññā. And it can be a condition for sati to be aware also of seeing and visible object. We should not plan anything, but we still do. 'It is craving which leads us away from the present object,' Khun Sujin said. The present object is not as we want it to be. We are impatient.

Is it useless to be in the shrineroom? No, paying respect to the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha is kusala. But we should not think that there is bhāvanā all the time. There are very few kusala cittas in a day compared to the many akusala cittas. Kusala citta may or may not be accompanied by right understanding. When kusala citta is not accompanied by right understanding it is not bhāvanā. Kusala citta is difficult, and kusala citta accompanied by right understanding is difficult, we should not think that it occurs often. Sitting will not induce right understanding. The time in the shrine-room can be used by reading from the scriptures and listening to the tapes as you do already. When we pay respect the kusala citta may be on the level of sīla. When there is right understanding of calmness and how to develop it, there can be moments of samatha. But we should not mislead ourselves into thinking that it is easy. At any time, if we do not plan it, there can be mindfulness of a nāma or rūpa which appears, as only an element, not self. If only one reality appears, seeing, not mixed with a person for example, not mixed with visible object, there is sati. Don't we often mix up realities? Are we sure when feeling appears, when lobha appears, when the citta accompanied by lobha appears? They each have their own characteristic.

We should have patience, we should be contented that there is 'study', not yet vipassanā paññā. We should 'let sati arise', as Khun Sujin so often says, not forcing it. We will see that we can be contented being in any place, wherever we happen to be by conditions. In some texts the Buddha spoke about the forest, to those monks who were there already, by conditions. In many other texts he told the monks that it does not matter whether one is in the forest or near a village. We should read all those texts with right understanding, otherwise we are bound to give them a wrong interpretation. We should be contented with whatever reality appears and be aware of it. When there is mindfulness there is contentment. We do not try to change the situation, there are only nāma and rūpa. It does not make any difference what posture we take. It is all the same.

We read in the 'Gradual Sayings', Book of the Tens, Ch. VII, par. 6, Weal and Woe, that the wanderer Sāmandakani asked Sariputta what is 'weal' and what is 'woe'. Sariputta said:

Your reverence, when there is discontent this woe may be looked for: Whether one goes, stands, sits, or lies, he reaches not happiness and pleasure; whether he has gone to the forest, to the root of a tree, to a lonely place, to life in the open air, to life amid the monks, he reaches not happiness and pleasure. Where there is discontent, this woe may be looked for.

Where there is content, your reverence, this weal may be looked for: Whether one goes, stands, sits or lies, he reaches happiness and pleasure. Whether he has gone to the forest, to the root of a tree, to a lonely place, to a life in the open air or life amid monks, he reaches happiness and pleasure.

Where there is content, your reverence, this weal may be looked for.

QUESTIONS FROM AUSTRALIA

(Siobhan Kilmartin)

1978

Question Seeing sees visible object and there is thinking of shape and form. Saññā (memory, a cetasika which accompanies each citta) remembers or marks the object which is experienced so that it can be recognized later on. Visible object is only what appears through the eyes, there is no person or thing in visible object. Still, we think of concepts time and again, we pay attention to shape and form. What does saññā mark? Visible object or shape and form and concepts?

Answer What saññā marks depends on the object which citta experiences. There are many moments of seeing just visible object, and the saññās which accompany such moments mark visible object. There are moments of paying attention to shape and form, and these are different from seeing. Also at such moments there is saññā and these saññās mark what citta experiences at such moments. When we think that we see a person or a thing, the object is a concept. Saññā marks that concept.

You were wondering why there are cittas which experience concepts time and again. We remember concepts because of saññā. But one can remember concepts with wrong view, then it is wrong saññā or perversity of saññā. The sotāpanna can also remember concepts, but he has no wrong view. He can think of people, there are conditions, but he has no misunderstanding of the moment of seeing which just experiences the visible object, and the moment of thinking which thinks of concepts. This teaches us a lesson. We should not try to avoid thinking of concepts, but learn the characteristic of thinking too, as not self. We may sometimes go off the right track and try to be aware of visible object only. But our life should be quite natural, just our ordinary daily life with all the thinking.

An interesting question came up during Khun Sujin's visit to England:

When we cultivate mettā, mettā is directed towards persons. But in reality there are no people, there are only nāma and rūpa. How then can the sotāpanna have mettā?

Khun Sujin answered that also the sotāpanna can think of people, but he does not think with wrong view. After the seeing there can, also for the sotāpanna, be thinking of concepts, of people. When he thinks, his thinking can be accompanied by mettā.

Question Visible object has different characteristics. Can these different characteristics be known by seeing?

Answer Visible object is different because of different conditions. But all that is visible can be seen.

In England the question came up about seeing, and focussing, on this or that thing or person. All that appears through the eyes

when there are conditions for seeing is visible object. 'Dont they all appear', Khun Sujin said. If we try to pinpoint about this visible object or that visible object we really get into a tangle. All this is reasoning and thinking, thinking with doubt and it cannot solve our problems.

If we have doubts about how saññā can remember concepts, we should know that there is saññā at each moment of citta and that past markings of objects by saññā conditions remembrance of objects now. But we should not try to catch saññā, that is impossible. We should not try to catch different moments of seeing and different visible objects either. We should just know that seeing is different from thinking of shape and form and that seeing is different from visible object, and knowing this in theory can be a condition for the arising of sati later.

Question If there are no things (or persons) in reality how can concepts seem so ordered and coherent so that we relate to them so much? Why do we think of this sound as car and that as bird? Particular types of experiences are associated to formulate these concepts.. It seems as though the different objects and door-ways are very much related. Could you help me sort out this tangle?

Answer As I said above, one can think of concepts without wrong view or with wrong view. We have not eradicated wrong view and thus we confuse the six doorways, we do not know yet one reality at a time, through one doorway at a time. Thus, it is not wrong to think of car or of bird, but it is wrong to take car or bird for 'self' and for things which exist. Each moment of experience falls away immediately, and the objects which are experienced fall away, but we take them for things which last. In order to develop right understanding, in order to see realities as they are, there should be mindfulness of the reality which appears now, and we will learn, this can be only one nāma or rūpa at a time. The six doorways are six worlds, and they are different. When there is seeing, the world is colour, when there is hearing, the world is sound. Khun Sujin said, 'Only one world, forget about the other worlds. When there is mindfulness of sound, forget about the other doorways, forget about concepts.' Then it may be time for thinking about a bird, and the thinking is then the reality at that moment, not the bird, bird is a concept. Right understanding should be developed of realities, of nāma and rūpa, not of concepts, but we should not avoid thinking of concepts, because the thinking is a reality and should also be known.

Why do we relate so much to concepts? We have wrong view and ignorance, we have clinging. We take the concepts for something absolute, things which exist and are very important. We have always thought in that way, and everybody does. But is that akusala or kusala? What is well coordinated, kusala or akusala? Since we al-

ways believe 'That person is doing this to me' and do not know the real causes and results in our lives (kamma and vipāka) we continue attachment, aversion and ignorance. If we see that this is not the way, we will develop the right understanding which can distinguish between the six worlds. Thinking is one reality, and it is completely different from seeing or hearing. We should find this out through our own experience, only that will solve our doubts about what is real.

In England someone was talking about the many nāmas and rūpas in our life and then Khun Sujin suddenly said:

"But it can be so helpful if there can be a moment of mindfulness right now."

Nothing is more helpful than that.

Question If one thinks 'I am good' or 'I am bad', is this conceit even if there is no direct comparison with another being is the other implied in such thoughts? Can there be thinking of self without comparison? Would this simply be lobha and dāṭṭhi (wrong view)?

Answer It all depends on the citta at this or at that moment. That is why mindfulness is the only way to find out about our different moments. 'I am good', we can think this in the way of: 'Now the citta is kusala' and this may be with right understanding. 'I am bad', may be 'Now the citta is akusala'. Or it can be: I, the self, is good or bad. That can be with wrong view. Or it can be with aversion. When one thinks, 'I am good, he is bad, or 'I am bad, he is good', there is conceit. A kind of upholding of oneself. But at the moment of conceit there cannot be wrong view. That is another moment. But who can find out? Only the one who is mindful of the present moment. There is no other way.

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Also, for the benefit of others, I finish with a short conversation I had with Khun Sujin in Manchester.

N. Seeing and visible object are not the same. This should be known in the practice, not just in theory. We should know the difference between nāma and rūpa. But we always join them together instead of being aware of their different characteristics as they appear one at a time.

Khun Sujin: When there is awareness there can be a beginning of turning towards the reality which experiences (nāma), no people, no thing. Just a moment of only one world. When we mix the different worlds we do not know what the reality is which experiences. When we begin to know what the reality is which experiences, this cannot be mixed with something else. Only one reality at a time. The reality which knows something is one

world. When there is this world, there cannot be any of the other worlds. This happens when you begin to know the reality which can experience something.

N. Sometimes cold appears, but I am not sure of the reality which experiences cold.

S. When doubt arises the reality which experiences cold has fallen away already. Paññā has to become keener and sharper (Khom kla' in Thai) in order to eliminate doubt. One has to know doubt too, only a reality. If there is not 'only' ('thawnan' in Thai) there is still doubt.

(I would like to add: we may call doubt nāma, but we still take it for something, for self, for so very important. When there is the knowledge of doubt as only, only a reality, not self, there is development of right understanding and this can eliminate doubt.)

N. This is a problem.

S. This problem can be solved when sati and paññā arise, only in that way.

N. But sati does not arise often, sometimes.

S. What is most important, is paññā. It develops little by little. So that you know what the reality is which knows or experiences something. And you must have patience ('cai jen') to get to know all characteristics of nāmas and rūpas, so that paññā can develop more. It is bound to be slowly. We can read about the former lives of the Buddha, ten or eight hundred lives. If there had not been satipaṭṭhāna, how could he have become a Buddha? It had to be developed in ordinary, normal life. No matter whether he was Mahosadha, or in any of the other lives, there must have been satipaṭṭhāna, otherwise he could not have become a Buddha.

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This was the conversation. With this in mind we read the Jatakas differently, we appreciate very much the Bodhisatta, when he was leading a laylife in many former births, developed satipaṭṭhāna. Just in ordinary, normal life. There is seeing, hearing, thinking in normal life. Satipaṭṭhāna can be developed.